

OTF/FEO Interaction

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I am writing to you on World Teachers' Day. Given what is happening in Ontario this fall, it is even more important that you take the time to celebrate yourself and your dedication to teaching and to each student who has come through your classroom door. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization has made October 5, World Teachers' Day to heighten public awareness of the enormous contributions of teachers who devote their lives to educating our children. Teaching is an honourable profession and we should all express our pride in what we do - especially today.

It also seems appropriate that on World Teachers' Day, I formally extend a welcome to all the new occasional teacher members of the Ontario Teachers' Federation. It is time that you, too, are full members of OTF. With your membership in OTF, we can now say that we represent 144,000 full-time, part-time and occasional teachers in the publicly funded schools in Ontario.

As the President of OTF, I was honoured to be able to stand in for you at the Mandela and the Children Celebration at the SkyDome in Toronto on September 25. The OTF Executive wholeheartedly supported our sponsorship of this historic opportunity. The children who listened to the inspirational words of Nelson Mandela had an educational experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Each of the last four Presidents of OTF has written to you about the challenges we face as teachers as our education system is under attack. I can only echo those words, yet again. Our greatest challenge is to defend and improve public education for each and every student entrusted to us. I know that you are up to the Challenge. On World Teachers' Day we should all remember why we became teachers. Congratulations to every teacher in Ontario on a job well done.

Yours truly,



Liz Barkley

The OTF Executive held its regular monthly meeting on Saturday,

September 26, 1998 at the OTF offices.

Some of the decisions which were made include:

Nelson Mandela and the Children

The Executive formally approved OTF's participation as a sponsor of Nelson Mandela and the Children at the SkyDome in Toronto on September 25, 1998.

President Liz Barkley reported on the wonderful excitement of the day. The students of Ontario got to hear first hand from Nelson Mandela, who has fought for justice and democracy for most of his life. One of his special concerns is the children of the world. He asked the students at SkyDome to reflect on why so many children live in poverty. President Barkley also told the Executive that OTF was able to arrange for a group of children from Victoria Harbour Public School to attend with their teacher, Paul Delaney.

Canadian Aboriginal Festival

The Executive agreed that OTF should be a sponsor of the Education Day at the Canadian Aboriginal Festival on November 20, 1998 in Toronto. The festival has been taking place for five years, but this is the first year that there will be a day devoted to educational activities. The day will include: an opportunity for students to meet with Elders; instruction in traditional crafts; dancing demonstrations; native theatre presentations; and instruction about the Great Law.

You will be receiving more details soon.

Ontario Curriculum Clearinghouse (OCC)

The Executive decided to formally withdraw from the OCC. The current direction of this organization is straying significantly from its mandate. OTF fully supported the OCC as it was originally founded. The primary purpose of the OCC was to provide a means to co-ordinate the sharing of curriculum materials intended for teachers at little or not cost.

In recent months, the OCC has been selling its services as an evaluator of published materials. It no longer provides a service to teachers, rather it provides services to the government and the commercial sector. The Executive felt that this was a serious shift in focus, and that since the OCC is no longer supporting teachers' work, that OTF had no choice but to withdraw. OTF has asked our representatives on the Board of Directors to resign their positions.

Strategic Planning

At the Annual Board of Governors' Meeting, the Governors approved an outline for a strategic plan for OTF. There was a planning meeting of the Staff and Executives of all Affiliates and

OTF on September 23 and 24. The OTF Executive adopted the recommendations coming from that planning meeting.

You will be receiving more details soon.

Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF-FEO), 1300 Yonge Street, Suite 200, Toronto, ON M4T 1X3
Tel: 416-966-3424 Tollfree: 1-800-268-7061 Fax: 416-966-5450

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